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AN AMERICANIZATION PROGRAM FOR LIBRARIES

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The Americanization of the immigrant is not merely a problem of rendering a service to the immigrant himself. It is not merely a question of philanthropy, of giving something to the newcomer who has arrived upon our shores. The Americanization of the immigrant means something larger and more fundamental than dealing with the immigrant himself—it means the making of America. This country fifty or sixty years ago was practically a homogeneous country. In the early days of immigration, most of our immigrants came from English-speaking or allied stocks. They came from England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, Germany, Holland, Belgium and Scandinavia. Immigrants from these countries readily acquired our language and adapted themselves to our conditions; hence it may be said that during the first part of the nineteenth century the country was unified in spirit, unified in language, unified in ideas, and unified in attitude toward democracy, liberty, and equality of opportunity. Since the Civil War, however, this has changed on account of the enormous development in industry, and immigrants have been coming from Southern and Eastern Europe and Asiatic countries, coming from countries wholly different in traditions, wholly different in customs, wholly different in language, wholly different in habits of thinking, ideas, and ideals.

Now, the injection of that mass—and there are thirteen million and over foreign-born in this country today—into our population of one hundred million means that we are not altogether that unified country which we were fifty or sixty years ago. It means we are not unified entirely in language. One person out of every eight in Pennsylvania does not speak the English language; almost as many are illiterate. It means that this country is not a unit in thought, for we have injected into our thought and into our national psychology

a mass of ideas foreign in origin, foreign in nature, foreign in type, thereby making more than anything else that uneasiness so noticeable in America today. We do not have complete sympathy between ourselves and the man of foreign birth or of foreign origin.

There were in the United States, in 1910, 2,953,011 foreign-born whites ten years of age or over who were unable to speak the English language. With immigration coming in at the rate of a million a year, mostly from non-English speaking countries, this has undoubtedly increased to five million. The number of illiterates is almost as large, and yet we are not coping with these conditions through our public schools by providing night-school facilities. Only 375 communities are providing evening classes directed toward overcoming that tremendous inability to speak English and the illiteracy of our foreign-born.

I am glad that Dr. Shiels has mentioned and taken up rather extensively the school phase of the problem, for of the agencies, educational in nature, who are to cope with this enormous task of Americanization, the school and the library are the most prominent. These are the two which must bear the burden of education, removing illiteracy, teaching the English language, and giving civic training. These two institutions hold the key to the situation.

Now I am not coming here to make a speech or read a paper. I am going to take up with you frankly some of the things I think ought to be done by librarians in foreign communities.

I may say that with reference to the library you stand in a position somewhat different from the school. The library can reach a substantial number of immigrant mothers, who will never attend any evening school, however effective or interesting may be its instruction. The library can get a

great many children over school age who will never again go to school. The library can get many immigrant adults who feel that they are too old to go to school, especially men, who are afraid of the ridicule of their children should they go to school. The library may become, if properly organized and equipped, the place where such people can go, drop in for an evening and read a book, since they are not bound, as in the schools, by any rules regulating attendance. This freedom of action appeals to a certain type of foreigner, and hence the library is in a position to take care of a substantial portion of the foreign population which the school can never reach.

Now, I am going to put three propositions before you. The first is for librarians to make a survey of your immigrant communities; find out how many aliens reside in your community; find out how many do not speak the English language and are illiterate, if the figures are obtainable. Of course in the census you cannot find complete figures for small communities, but you can find some data of value. Find out how many attend schools and what schools are reaching them; what nationalities are attending school; what the principal nationalities are; what foreign-language newspapers there are, and who their editors are. Find out the districts in which the aliens live. Find out what nationalities live in those districts. In other words, learn your community, so that you can know what will be demanded of the library by the foreigners living in that community. It is indispensable that the librarian or a committee representing the librarian should know the foreigners, know who they are, know where they live, know what schools they are going to, and know their relative social, industrial and economic status, because only by knowing these facts can you adequately equip your library to take care of their needs. In other words, it is a question of studying your community and the needs of the foreigners residing therein. You can get much of that information in the census, but most of it must be obtained by personal investigation or observation in

the field. That is something which you must take care of locally.

The second proposition is this: make a survey of your own conditions. What have you in the library for the use of foreigners? Two years ago we made a survey of the conditions, provisions, and facilities for foreigners in libraries in a state adjoining New Jersey. We found some remarkable things. We found one community which was composed almost entirely of those of foreign birth or foreign origin. In that community, made up of immigrants largely from Eastern and Southern Europe, and even Asiatic countries, 25 or 30 nationalities being represented, there were four books in foreign languages,—only four Italian books. The same thing was true of many communities. We found others that did not have any foreign-language books, and we found still other communities that had only German or French books, which were put in largely for students in high schools or their teachers; not for the Germans or French in the community. I am going to mention a city of about 500,000 inhabitants. Thirty-three and one-third per cent of its population is of foreign birth; seventy-five per cent of foreign origin, that is, of foreign birth and of foreign parentage. There were 325,000 volumes in the entire library system, including the branches. Only 21,000 were in foreign languages. Of that 21,000, over 16,000 were in German and French, not in the languages of those who needed the books. There were, for example, only 401 Italian books for an Italian population of 20,000. Fifty thousand foreigners in that city could not speak the English language.

Take an inventory of your book supply for the foreigners, and see whether you are meeting the conditions and needs as shown by your first survey of the community, and your eyes will be opened immediately to something tangible which you can do—buy books. It may be difficult to get those books because of lack of money, because the city administration, perhaps, does not look with especial favor on the library. Let me suggest a way of overcoming that. Only

by getting an enormous public interest through coöperation—the interest of societies of all descriptions, native and foreign-born—will you be able to overcome apathy on the part of the city council in the appropriation of money. I believe in the militant manner of getting appropriations, and not in the apathetic manner which many of us adopt of sitting down and saying, “We need \$10,000,” and then waiting for the report to be read by some councilman or congressman, or what not. It may never be read, and hence you may not get your \$10,000.

Here are a few of the questions you must ask yourselves in the library introspection you may want to make as a second part of your work. What is the number of books in foreign languages in your library? Is the number available in proportion to the foreign-born population? Are the foreign-language books in proportion to the languages spoken by the various immigrant groups? What is the circulation of the foreign-language books? How does it compare with the circulation of books in English? Are the foreign-language books those which the immigrant wants to read? Are they those which the immigrant should read for Americanization purposes? There is quite a difference. What foreign newspapers or magazines are available for the reading room? How much are they read? What special means does your library use to encourage immigrants to take advantage of your facilities? What are the titles and numbers of books for immigrants on citizenship and learning English? If you will inquire of some successful librarians, you will find they have studied their communities and the conditions of their own libraries, and have endeavored to build up a foreign department so that conditions and needs may be met.

Now the third proposition which I am going to lay before you, and which I hope somebody will act upon, is an Americanization program for a public library. One of the things really lacking in this country is coöperation. The Bureau of Education at Washington is constantly

emphasizing the importance of coöperation; the importance of getting together on a proposition, not of endeavoring to carry it out exclusively for your benefit, perhaps purely for your own pride. Get together and render national, state, or city service; that is the keynote upon which each should work. Hence, interview members of your foreign societies. Ask to speak at their meetings, ask to have announcements made relative to the libraries. Encourage the appointment of committees for these societies to represent the various nationalities for the purpose of coöperating with the librarian and the assistants in the library in purchasing books suitable for each nationality. Encourage coöperating committees on publicity. The only way you will get effective publicity for a library is by getting people to talk about it; by getting the foreigner himself to talk about the library facilities; by going to the foreign-language societies and asking for their coöperation; by making speeches on the public library and its facilities, and by urging the appointment of committees to give publicity to the library and get people to patronize it. Then you will have started a publicity campaign in behalf of the library at the very root where it should be started, with the foreigner himself as the active agent. Circularize by multigraph letters or otherwise the various foreign societies in your community, enlisting their interest, sending them, if you have them, printed or typewritten lists of foreign-language or English books suitable for their respective nationalities. Then interview also the foreign-language newspaper editors and persuade them to insert free advertisements.

There are two agencies which can be made exceedingly important factors in Americanization. We have come to take the position in this country that the foreign society and the foreign-language press are against Americanization. They are, if you set yourselves up against them and constantly attack them as being un-American. You can, by going to them, get their coöperation. They have a well-organized association, the “Association of Foreign-

Language Newspapers," with about 742 membership newspapers. You can get them to do a great deal through their columns in Americanization work. They will give you free space for articles concerning the library; they will advertise your library facilities. Try them out by writing articles on the importance of learning English, of reading books, of becoming literate. It has been done in many communities. These two agencies, the foreign society and the foreign-language press, should be taken advantage of more largely by the Americans of this country and made into an Americanizing influence, not left out in the cold to promote foreign ideas and ideals. We must utilize these tremendous factors in the life of the immigrant in this country in order to overcome that element of decentralization in the Americanization process which has been going on for so many years.

I would suggest further that you display posters and handbills, regarding library facilities, in lecture halls, fraternity meeting places, stores, banks, steamship ticket agencies, even saloons, if necessary. These should be in foreign languages and also in English. You may, through the Boy Scouts, distribute handbills, circulars, and small dodgers advertising the library. Through the various industries you may distribute pay-envelope leaflets. These circulars are folded and slipped into the pay envelopes by the company paymaster. They should be put out in sufficiently large numbers, so they may be inserted two or three times during the year. This is a very effective way of reaching the foreigner, because the slip comes with his pay. He reads it out of curiosity and interest, because he thinks it is a communication from his employer, and has some reference to an increase in pay.

Request night-school teachers to devote at least one lesson in an English or civics course to the library and its facilities. If it can possibly be arranged, ask that different classes be brought up to the library from time to time for some oral instruction upon the library facilities, how to take out library books, what the rules are, and

so forth. That cannot be done, of course, in the larger cities, on account of the enormous numbers, but it has been done successfully in cities of two or three hundred thousand inhabitants or less. It is a very effective means of familiarizing them with the library and its facilities, a work which you cannot so effectively carry out through dodgers, handbills, and posters. Also make arrangements with the evening-school teachers so that you may speak to some of the more advanced classes concerning the library and its facilities. Then if you can arrange with the director of evening schools for a mass meeting on library facilities, at which the librarian, his assistants, or other interested individuals, may appear and present the objects, facilities, rules, etc., of the library.

Then, too, in connection with the evening schools, you may conduct a campaign of issuing library cards. Print application slips. Have these distributed by the evening-school teachers, filled in by pupils wishing library books and giving satisfactory credentials, and returned to the library so that cards may be issued. You will find that there will be an enormous increase in library attendance and circulation of books through this method.

Clerks of naturalization courts should be provided with these slips to be handed to the applicants for citizenship. These slips may urge the applicant to patronize the library, read books about the government and constitution of the United States, and learn English, so that they may be equipped to pass their naturalization examination.

Finally, I would suggest preparing an exhibit of library facilities specially adapted to foreigners, an exhibit which can be placed for short periods in the various halls where foreign societies hold their meetings, in public schools, and in other places where foreigners congregate in large numbers. Such an exhibit may be placed on a large placard or displayed in some other suitable form so that the immigrant will be attracted to it and will be induced

in this way to pay more attention to library facilities.

In closing I wish to make one comment, and that is this, that while there are many libraries in this country which are doing effective Americanization work, the number is relatively small. It is small for two reasons: first, because librarians and Americans generally have not appreciated the problem of Americanization and the part which the library can play in this process, and second, because our state and city governments have not interested themselves

sufficiently in civic questions. *Government itself is a civic factor, yet we have been too much interested in the machinery of government and not enough in real civic relationships between the various citizens of a community.* We must do something more than merely try to educate: we must try to inspire and instill in the mind of the foreigner the instinct of civic responsibility to the community. That is one of the things which the school and the library must and can do in this great Americanization problem.

AMERICANIZING BOOKS AND PERIODICALS FOR IMMIGRANTS

BY J. M. CAMPBELL, *Director, Work with foreigners, Massachusetts Free Public Library Commission*

I think the first time the American Library Association put itself on record as having any duty towards our immigrant population was at the Narragansett meeting in 1906 when Dr. Canfield made a motion that the institute should investigate the subject and report to the Association. What became of that suggestion, I do not know. If there has been an investigation and report by that august body, it has not reached the ears of one humble member of the Association!

At that meeting, I made a plea for more and better material—books, pamphlets and magazines—with which to satisfy the hungry demands of our foreign-speaking population. If I recollect rightly, I referred to the “starvation diet” on which we were trying to produce results. I regret to say, we have not fattened perceptibly since then, though we have a *little* for which we can give thanks and I am here once more to ask—with your indulgence—that the members of the Association make known our starving condition, in the hope that we will receive help to enable us to carry out the program Mr. Wheaton has laid out for us.

This seems to be the psychological moment, for “Americanization” is the word

of the hour. There are innumerable definitions of the word, from those of the presidential candidates to that given me by an Italian friend. In response to my inquiry as to what he thought of all the talk about Americanization, he said, “With all respect, I really think the Americans who are so much agitated about the loyalty of the foreign-born now, are really whistling to keep up their courage. They know, in the struggle for wealth and social position, many Americans have forgotten the patriot’s zeal and the passion for justice which in the old days made this country—in the true sense of the word—a real democracy. We have to acknowledge that we have had a privileged class with its grip on politics which, in some cases, used its power in such disgraceful ways that ‘politics’ became a by-word for corruption. In the swinging of the pendulum there is hope for the return to the sturdy incorruptibility of the just and liberty-loving that the newcomers shall be impressed with citizenship of the pioneers. And in order the importance of living up to our *ideals*—rather than in following our recent example—everyone is now shouting ‘Americanization.’ There is no need to fear the lack of loyalty to American ideals on the part of